# I'M SENDING HIM BACK!

## INTRODUCTION

A. Aim: To discuss Onesimus, who was a ”runaway servant,” whom Paul converted in Rome, and returned to his master, as a Christian and now “a faithful and beloved brother” in the Lord.

B. Proposition: To establish that without *sincere forgiveness* of others, we will not *be forgiven ourselves*.

C. Text: Colossians 4:7-9, Philemon 1, 2 Timothy 4:16-18

D. Outline. Paul’s,

1. Confidence in Philemon
2. Conversion of Onesimus
3. Consensus of Philemon

E. Introductory Remarks.

1. This Letter, though only one chapter, has a tremendous lesson for all Christians, especially for those who consider themselves “in authority.” This will be one of our Expository Sermons. We will review this section of scripture with great interest and anticipation of what Paul is about to share with all of us regarding our love for each other, whether master or servant. Paul’s appeal to Philemon to receive his former slave once again into his care, yet not as an enslaved person anymore, but rather as a brother in Christ. Paul tells Philemon, “I’m Sending Him back,” to you as my “own son” to receive him again without any reprisal for his departure from you. He who once was useless has now become “more useful” than ever before.

2. First, we will consider Paul’s confidence in Philemon to do what he is about to request of him regarding his former slave “Onesimus,” whose name means “useful.” We are given no reason why Onesimus fled his enslaver, nor how he ended up in Rome. I see only the “handiwork” of God, and His will in providing to this “runaway” a new start in Christ, by his providential arrival at the door of Paul in Rome, to obtain the help he sought, while not even knowing it! Philemon might have spoken of Paul during Onesimus’ attendance in the worship being held in his house. Paul’s imprisonment was well known to all the churches of Christ everywhere. God is able!

3. Second, we will discuss Onesimus’ conversion to Christ while with Paul in Rome. I might suggest that many who are now incarcerated are looking for Christ! I pray this lesson will encourage any of you who read it to seek out and find the Lord, for He is ever near you, and much more during your time of imprisonment. Your offenses can be forgiven; however, you must serve the time imposed by the courts. Make this a time of investigation for a fundamental change to occur within, so that when you are released, you will not return as a repeat offender! Seek how to be “Born Anew,” John 3:3-8.

4. Lastly, we will investigate Paul’s approach to win Philemon’s forgiveness of Onesimus, and his reception again into his fellowship. However, not as a bond servant, but now as a free man, first in Christ, and now a brother to his owner, Philemon. Paul appeals to Philemon rather than commanding him to receive his son, because “I’m sending him back.” Therefore, receive him, that is, (like receiving) my own heart.” Paul reminds Philemon of his own debt to him and asks him to prepare lodging for him as well. Let us consider our first point in this lesson.

[PART – I]

## BODY OF LESSON

## I PAUL’S CONFIDENCE IN PHILEMON

A. Paul salutation: "**Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ**, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to the *beloved Ap-phia*, *Ar-chip-pus* our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," Philemon 1:1-3. *What an exciting* salutation to his addressee (*Phi-lemon*). **Like other salutations**, Paul expresses thanks for his fellow workers, soldiers, and beloved saints in Christ.

**1. He ever reminds** his readers where he was, and who he belonged to: "**A prisoner** of Jesus Christ, and let's not forget Rome as well." **Paul's only request was** that they pray: "***For him***, that utterance might be given unto Him, that he might open his mouth boldly to make known *the mystery of the gospel*, for which I am an ambassador in bonds, that I might speak boldly, as I ought to speak," Ephesians 6:19-20; Colossians 4:2-4. ILLUSTRATE: "*Peter and John*...council, whether it be right in the *sight of God* to hearken to you...God, ***ye judge***. *For we cannot but speak*...and heard," Acts 4:19-20.

**2. Paul remembers those** who were with him, *Timothy.* **But in his** "*Farewell, he mentions* Epaphras, *my fellow prisoner*, in Christ Jesus, *who greets you*, as do Mark, *Ari-star-chus*, Demas, and Luke, my fellow laborer. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen," Philemon 1:23-25.

[Introductions and Acknowledgments] See attachment.

**3. He makes no mention** of *Onesimus* in his salutation. **However**, he would become the entire reason for this *Letter to Philemon*. We will now begin our Exposition of this excellent Letter written by the hand of Paul, unto Philemon, regarding his son Onesimus. **We will consider**,

B. First, Paul's continued prayer for Philemon. **He wrote:** "I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers," Philemon 1:4. In every Letter, Paul begins by telling the readers how often he mentions them in his prayers. *Prayer is the most potent weapon* we have to combat disappointments, discouragement, trials, hardships, sufferings, and even temptations! When you are alone and feeling abandoned, remember how close you are to your heavenly Father, and know that your prayers to Him are welcome. Paul's only request to the saints was this: "*Remember him in their prayers."* **Observe,**

C. Further, Paul's compliments to Philemon. **He continues**: "*Hearing of your love and faith* which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, that the sharing of your faith may become effective (*helpful to all*) by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus," Philemon 1:5-6. **Your love and faith** in the *Lord and all the saints* have abounded **unto you in every good work in Christ.** The **apostle compliments** this brother for his faith and love for the Lord and for others, especially for the saints. *He knew Philemon's love and faith* would permit him to welcome back this servant, even more now that he is also his brother in Christ!

ILLUSTRATION: Learn how to give **sincere compliments** to others. Jesus gave them. Paul writes to others, beginning with sincere compliments, and we will grow closer to one another through our compliments! **A thank-you** goes a long way and will come back to you in abundance! More sales were made because *the salesperson* began their discussion first with a "*sincere compliment*" and then an offer to buy! Compliments recognize *the person* and not *the product*.

D. Finally, Paul's joy and consolation in Philemon. **He concludes**: "*For we have great joy and consolation* in your love, because you have refreshed the hearts of the saints, brother," Philemon 1:7. Here is why? **Paul states:** "*I have great joy and consolation in*

*your love*." **Why Paul?** "Because you have refreshed (encouraged) the hearts of the saints, BROTHER! How could Philemon say no to what Paul was preparing to ask him?
E. Conclusion: To whom do you have confidence? We are warned not to have confidence in men.
**1. David wrote**: "*It is better to trust* in the Lord than to put confidence in men. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes," Psalms 118:8-9. How about the....
**2. Solomon penned:** "*Trust in the Lord* with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy path. Do not be wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil," Proverbs 3:5-7. **Brother Davis describes**.... *I'll r**eview it from***,**
**3. Paul's Letter** to Ephesus. Please turn to Ephesians 1:12-14, "**That we**...**In Him** you also *trusted*, **after that** *you heard* the **word of truth**, the **gospel of your salvation**: in whom also, *having believed*, you were *sealed with* the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. See also Acts 19:1-7. **By Him** we are "*sealed* unto the *day of redemption*," Ephesians 4:30. That is, "The *redemption* of our **bodies**," Romans 8:23. ***To the Thessalonians***, **Paul explains** it to them. 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 4:13-18.
NOTE: *We will review this text again in the Invitation. Please "dog-ear this page."*
**Let's consider now**,

**II PAUL'S CONVERSION OF ONESIMUS**
A. First, Paul appeals for Onesimus. "*Therefore, though I* might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, yet for love's sake I instead appeal to you—**being such** *a one as Paul, the aged*, and now also a *prisoner of Jesus Christ*," Philemon 1:8-9. **Paul acknowledges** that he is preparing to ask Philemon for something he DOES NOT demand as an *apostle of Christ*. **Too often**, those in authority forget that not everyone responds to orders; they are more likely to be moved by a simple request. *In marriage, husbands* often demand *rather than* entreat of their **sweethearts**! Paul reminds himself that he does not have to ***demand of a brother*** who has the *character and disposition* of a man like Philemon. He merely needs to ask! **This he is preparing to do NOW**. **Observe,**
B. Further, Paul's reason for his appeal. "*I appeal to you* for my son Onesimus, *whom I have begotten while in my chains,* who once was *unprofitable* to you, but now is *profitable* to you and to me," Philemon 1:10-11. Listen to the heart of this apostle. **Let me suggest from here on,**
**IMPORTANT NOTE**: Consider now that **Philemon** is **READING THIS LETTER**! **Observe**,
**1. Paul begins**, "*I appeal to you* for **my son Onesimus**." An appeal is *much softer* than "**I demand**." The subject now before us is this: ***I want to appeal*** to you on behalf of my "*son Onesimus*." **Right now**, there might still be *some hostilities toward* this "*runaway*." This may have come as a complete surprise to Philemon. However, he is being compelled, *out of kindness, love, and compassion*, to **consider Paul's request**. We might be asking: "Why?" **He continues**,
**2. Here's Paul's reason**: "*I have begotten him* while in my chains." Somehow, God directed Onesimus through His divine providence to the "door of Paul." **Many were coming** "in and out" of Paul's lodging in Rome. Now, this young man had come, only

to be *begotten by Paul*, "by **his faith and obedience** to *the gospel of Christ*." Just like others, he was touched by the message of Christ's love and grace, even for runaways from an ***earthly master***, into the arms of a ***heavenly Master*** – Christ Jesus, who is **Lord, God, and Savior** of all that would believe and *obey His precious will*!

a. Paul would have told *Onesimus* that *his departure from his master* would have to be addressed, even though *he is now in Christ*. **Obedience to the gospel** will not change who you are in your status in life. *Worker rather than supervisor*, person of color rather than white, rich or poor in terms of wealth. **However**, it will prepare you to live and work with others, whether or not they are in or out of Christ. [It's your *attitude*, not your *aptitude*, that will determine your *altitude* **in life** and **in Christ**. It (your attitude) will permit you to soar *into the heights* you cannot imagine!] —**The Lord** you serve is the God of all possibilities! If you're a boss, supervisor, or leader, **remember** who put you there!

b. However, the relationship between *Philemon* and *Onesimus* has changed for **both their good**!

c. To Paul, Onesimus was a "son"; yet to Philemon, he is still considered a servant.

d. However, he (*Onesimus*) and his master (*Philemon*) are now brothers in Christ!

**3. Paul continues**: "*Who once was* unprofitable to you, in his former state: *servant and runaway*."

**4. But now** "*He is* profitable **to you and to me**." He was once "useless" but now, "useful and profitable." Christians, whether employees or supervisors, should be the best workers and leaders in every workplace. **Dependable, trustworthy, and competent** in their duties and responsibilities! Striving to be: *technically and tactically proficient, and working* creatively in everything they DO!

ILLUSTRATION: The "master and servant" relationship during this time WAS NOT as depicted in Hollywood! So don't be confused by our use of "**servant**" and "**master**." What is essential is that God has made us **all one in Christ**, and as such, this *should have* removed *all hatred and racial abuse* from the ***hearts and lives*** of all *who call* themselves Christians. If it still exists, **Christ does not** live in you! **Nor are you** considered "*the child of God*" **in His eyes**. Nor the eyes of the World!

a. First, **John pens**: "*He that saith he is in the light*, and **hateth** his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that **loveth** his brother abideth in the light," 1 John 2:8-11; John 8:12.

b. Further, **he notes**: "*We know that we have passed from death unto life,* **because** we love the brethren…**Hereby** perceive we the love of God; **He laid down his life** for us: and we ought to lay down our **lives for the brethren**," 1 John 3:14-16. Here is the "fruit test."

c. Finally, **he warns**: "We love him, **because** he first loved us. **If a man says**, I love God, and hates his brother, **he is a liar**…how can *he love God* whom *he hath not seen*? **This commandment** *have we from Him*, **That he who** *loveth* God *loves* his **brother also**," 1 John 4:19-21. **Love is TS'BOD**!

ILLUSTRATION: What hatred bears; hatred brings! Galatians 6:7-10. If you carry in your heart hatred, you will eventually bring it to your own home. Hatred, like acid, will *destroy the container* that stores it! **Remember** Jesus' words, Matthew 7:12. DUO… DUY. Do unto others….do unto you!

[*HazMat workers, whether handlers or haulers, know the dangers of these hazardous materials!*]

C. Finally, Paul's decision to send Onesimus back. **He concludes**: "*I am sending him back*. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel," Philemon 1:12-13.

**1. What are you saying**, Paul? I am sending him back to you! Surely, Philemon's house was not a place of hatred and abuse? **Paul knew him**; he just described what kind of brother…to the saints.

a. Sometimes our report of a situation or an occurrence is inconsistent with the facts that are known by others in their story! I cannot give you the story that Onesimus might have told Paul about why he ran away from Philemon's house. They are not recorded in the text. **However**,

b. Paul knew this man. Whatever this runaway reported, Paul knew the other man in the story. This might be a warning to us. **Especially parents**! Our children might not always give us all the facts about a situation that puts them in need of our help. However, we would be wise to investigate ourselves unless we know the other person in the report.

ILLUSTRATION: Christians *will not make* false or misleading *accusations or reports*. **But a runaway might!** I can most certainly say: "Paul would not be sending this young convert back to a hostile environment." Sometimes our assemblies can become "*hostile environments*."

c. Some Christians are like "runaways." **We might not** know all the facts. And we don't need to! It is their heavenly Father who will welcome them back home! They leave a son or daughter, and return a son or daughter. *Restored fully in God's favor*! Our challenge will be to accept them back with the same love and forgiveness God does! **Remember** Matthew 6:14-15; Matthew 7:1-5.

ILLUSTRATION: Remember the prodigal Son? The Father welcomed him back home. The son began his confession, but the Father did not desire the whole story. Your heavenly Father already knows you and the details of your confession. *Just tell Him you are sorry* and want to come home! *He will* receive you with open arms! **This is what** Paul is asking Philemon to do for him. But know,

**2. Paul's assurance**. He knew Philemon "*would receive him*," maybe even welcome him home!

a. "With the same love and kindness that fills the very heart of Paul." *Onesimus was Paul's son now*. **And he entreats** Philemon to receive him back without reprisal or punishment. **He wrote**,

b. "Whom I wished to keep with me." Paul desired to keep him to aid him in his ministry in Rome. Why Paul? Listen,

c. "That on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel." Onesimus could be a great helper, even on your behalf. He could minister to me in my chains for the sake of the gospel.

**3. Paul closes this thought** by saying: "*I would not keep him* even for this reason, not *without your consent and blessings*!" [He would not use his apostleship to secure this runaway's freedom!] Although he is Paul's son, Philemon is still his master. **Paul infers**: I leave any further decision regarding this matter to you. **However**, be certain, *he is returning* to you, *not as a servant* only, but now much more: *as your brother* in Christ. **Please turn your** Bibles to **Colossians 4:1-9**.

D. Onesimus did become a helper for **Philemon and Paul**. Paul mentions him in his letter to the *church at Colossae*. **He inscribed**: "*Masters,* give your *bondservants*

what is just and fair, knowing that you have a Master in heaven." *Treat them kindly*, being just and fair to all. **And don't forget**: you have **a Master in heaven**, who will give to you in the same manner you give to those whom you oversee as managers, supervisors, or leaders! **Paul admonishes**, both *masters and saints:*

**1. First, "Continue** *earnestly in prayer*...meanwhile praying also for us, for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make manifest, as I ought to speak."

**2 Further, "Let your** speech always *be with grace, seasoned with salt*, that you may know how you ought to answer each other," Colossians 4:1-6. **Notice:** I want to emphasize verses 7-9. **Observe,**

**3. Next, "*Ty-chi-cus***, a *beloved brother*, **faithful minister**, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you **all the news** about me. I am sending him to you (***Ty-chi-cus*****)** for this very purpose, that *he may know your circumstances* and *comfort your hearts*," Colossians 4:7-8. [*Watch whose name* **comes up next**],

**4. Finally, "*With Onesimus***, *a faithful and beloved brother*, who is one of you. **They will make known** *to you all things* **which are happening here**," Colossians 4:9. **Onesimus is now like Timothy**!

ILLUSTRATION: "*I trust in the Lord Jesus* to send Timothy shortly unto you," Philippians 2:19-24. **Paul says,** "I have no *one like-minded*; All seek their own, but you *know his proven character*; **like a son**, he has *served with me* in the Gospel." God has enabled Onesimus to be ***Paul's son, fellow laborer, and minister in the gospel***. To help out in Colossae and everywhere else, **Paul would send him**. I say again, our God is able! When brothers and sisters return to the Lord, put them to work! **Invest time in them** to show you have forgiven them, and the church will, too! **Onesimus has a new start**. *He is profitable* to all the saints! **Those who return home** should be *received by us*, *loved by us*, and *forgiven by us.* **Until then:** "*Yet, count him not as an enemy* but *admonish him* or *her as a* brother or (sister), in the Lord," 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15. **See also** Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20.

E. Conclusion: *To whom can you trust* in your conversion? **Let me confidently say**, we can trust in Jesus' right and power to save us—**all who** "believed and were obedient to the gospel of Christ," Romans 1:14-16. **Paul's preaching** not only saved Onesimus, but also many Roman soldiers, and "*Especially those who are of Caesar's household*," Philippians 4:21-23. *He will accept all* who come *in trust, faith, and obedience.* **Let me remind** all that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever," Hebrews 13:8; John 14:6; Matthew 11:28-30. We are now ready to begin closing. [Turn your Bibles to Ephesians 1:12-14.] *We are in the invitation now*! Top of Page 2, above. **Next Lord's Day**, we will consider our last point in this lesson – in Part II!

[PART - II]

**III PAUL'S CONSENSUS OF PHILEMON**

A. First, Paul requests Philemon's consent. **He penned**: "*But without your consent* I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be **by compulsion**, as it were, but **voluntary**," Philemon 1:14. Consider Paul's reasoning,

**1. "But without your consent**, I wanted to do nothing." *In other words*, if you cannot permit me, I will not make any decisions regarding Onesimus on my own. A great blessing awaits Philemon's consent regarding Onesimus: (to *accept* him back, *forgive* him, and *return* him **TO PAUL IN ROME**).

**2. "That your good deed** might not be by compulsion." *The word compulsion means to be under pressure, coercion, or obligation.* **Paul wanted his son Philemon** to decide the matter without any *apostolic authority*. **The blessing** of giving comes *from doing it voluntarily*. He will suggest that next. **The apostle wrote**,

a. To Corinth: "**But this I say**, *He which soweth sparingly* shall reap also sparingly; and *he which soweth bountifully* shall reap also bountifully. **Every man** according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God can make all grace abound toward you; that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, (that it) may abound (in and from you) to every good work," 2 Corinthians 9:6-8. Brother Luther's favorite text! Just as our Lord and Savior,

b. To Corinth again: *"For ye know* the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, *though he was rich*, yet for (our) sakes *he became poor*, that we through **His poverty**; might **become rich**," 2 Corinthians 8:9.

ILLUSTRATION: God does not need our money. He already owns everything, Psalms 50:10-15. He gives to us so we can be a blessing to others, Acts 20:35. Malachi's message is essential here, Malachi 3:8-10. Will a man rob God? Jehovah said: "You do in tithes and offerings." When you hold Him up, what will happen when He holds back from you? **Listen to Haggai.**

c. **He wrote**: "Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways! You have *sown much*, and *bring in little*; you *eat*, but do *not have enough*; you *drink*, but you are *not filled* with drink; you *clothe yourselves*, but no one *is warm*; And he *who earns wages*, earns wages to put (them) *into a bag with holes*," Haggai 1:5-6. *Can you see this Picture*?

d. The blessings come when we do it in "love, cheerfully, without compulsion, not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." Remember, you can't out-give God! Paul wanted Philemon *to receive a blessing from God* for allowing **Onesimus to remain with him** to "*help in his work of spreading the gospel of Christ.*" **He tells him,**

**3. I am hoping you** would do these things voluntarily. Onesimus might be carrying this Letter to Philemon when he returned to him! However, the text does not state any such things. **In my mind's eye,** I see this happening: 1) *Onesimus arrives* back at Philemon's house; 2) *Philemon is given*, and reads the Letter; 3) *Philemon says* to Onesimus: "*Welcome home, brother*." **Do you want** to go back to Rome to help Paul? 4) *Onesimus says*, "Yes, brother." 5) *Philemon* says, "**Let's get you read**y *to return, my brother*, so that you can *help Pops in Rome*!"

**4. Why would you suggest** that, Freeman? *Because of the goodness* of his heart to Paul, and because he knew the importance of Paul's work in Rome! *Reading between the lines***: I see Paul asking him for this favor**. Now, how could Philemon say NO! Again, it is *Paul's approach in this matter.*

**5. Paul places his desire** for Onesimus to be returned to him, although he does not say it. And he knew what Philemon's response was going to be, because: "*He knew the man*!" **Here it is,**

B. Further, Paul explains God's purpose. **He continues**: "*For perhaps he departed for a while* (hour) for this purpose, that you might *receive him forever* (eternal), no longer as a servant but more than a servant—a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord," Philemon 1:15-16. **What a compelling close**! *Philemon must make the final decision*! Paul gives him what he

believes is God's purpose in all of this, which he now has to reconcile in his own heart. And he will because Paul knows the man! The apostle now lays out what he believes was God's divine providence for his son, Onesimus. Observe,

**1. First,** "*For perhaps he* (meaning Onesimus) departed for a while for this purpose." So, God could prepare him for a greater work in Christ.

a. "*That you might receive him forever*." This temporary departure was for a greater purpose for you and Onesimus. God always has for all His children a greater purpose, and that is to be with Him now and later for eternity. Philemon will receive this Letter from Onesimus, and even read it within his presence. Paul closes this Letter, saying: Receive him back as God has sent him, for His glory and honor.

b. "*No longer as a servant*." Look on him no more as just a servant. He is now more than such; He is now the child of God. Brought into the kingdom of God, which once was a servant of yours, but now as a servant of Jesus Christ. Paul even extends this further,

c. "*But more than a servant*—a **beloved brother**." He is *much more* than a servant: "*now a brother in Christ*." If you consider **yourself my son**, then consider him **also my son**: *behold, you be brethren*! **Remember Abram's** words to Lot! **Observe**,

d. "**And Abram said unto Lot**, *Let there be no strife*, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen, and thy herdsmen, *for we be (are) brethren*," Genesis 13:8; Psalms 133:1.

**2. Second**, "*Especially to me*, but how much more to you, as a brother." *Born out of the same womb:* "**both the water and of the Spirit**," John 3:3-5. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. **Love works no ill to its neighbor,** and more so to *one's brother or sister* in the Lord!

**3. Third**, "*Both in the* flesh and in the Lord." Philemon and Onesimus are now brothers in the flesh and in the Lord—no longer master and servant, but children of God.

**4. Onesimus's greater work**. His name comes up again in **Paul's Letter to the Colossians**. He wrote: "*Tychicus, a beloved brother*…I am sending him to you for this purpose…*With Onesimus*, a *faithful and beloved brother*, who is one of you. *They will make known* to you all things which are **happening here**," Colossians 4:7-9. **They will inform you about me!**

a. This is **the same man** who was a "*runaway*" but *returned* to his master. Paul now mentions him as a "*faithful and beloved brother*." **Observe that**.

b. **Matthew Henry wrote**: "*He was sent back from Rome* along with **Tychicus**. This was he whom Paul had begotten in his bonds, Philemon 1:10. **He (Onesimus) had been** servant to Philemon, and **was a member…of their church**. **He was converted at Rome**, whither he had fled from his master's service; and was now sent back, ***it is probable***, with the **Epistle to Philemon**, *to introduce him again* into his master's family," Page 1102. [Edited by me.] See Reference Section.

c. ***God's providence*** can be seen clearly in this young man's life. *Tychicus is not mentioned* in the **salutation or farewell** of the Letter to Philemon. *He could*, however, have **joined the delegation** in Rome *after Paul had closed the Letter*. **Paul, however**, thought it wise **to send Tychicus with Onesimus**, *together back to Colossae*. Maybe even in the delivery of the Letter to Philemon. As we move to conclude this lesson. **Paul's final words of entreaty** to Philemon. **Observe**,

C. Finally, **Paul requests Philemon's** cooperation. **He continues**: "*If then you count me as a partner*, receive him as you would me. But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay,

not to mention that you owe me even your own self, besides. Yes, brother, **let me have joy** from you in the Lord; refresh my heart **in the Lord**. Having confidence in your obedience (*cooperation*), I write to you, **knowing that you will do** even more than I say (*ask*)," Philemon 1:17-21. **Observe**,

**1. First**, "*If then you count me as a partner*." **Paul reverses** the roles here in *these closing comments*. **He states**: If you consider me a partner in this work, and let me add: of faith. *Please grant me* this favor **as your partner**, and *do the same* **for Onesimus** as you would for **your brother**. **Observe,**

**2. Second**, "*Receive him as you would me*." Receive *my son Onesimus* as a **partner as well**. If he then *is a partner*, he is *no longer* a servant. But, above all, **he is our brother**! **For in Christ**, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek*, male nor female, bond nor free. **We are all one** in Christ Jesus our Lord," Galatians 3:26-29. **It would do well** to remind all our brothers today of this very same thing. If we do so, **maybe we can grow close to each other**, rather than **fleeing from each other's *presence in housing, work, and worship***. May God forgive us for our foolishness in this regard! **Paul now addresses any debt! [Surely, his absence did bear some cost to Philemon!]**

**3. Third**, "*But if he has wronged you or owes anything*." **Listen to this apostle**,

a. "*Put that on my account*." **Paul says**, **bill it to me!** Please add any worthy debt to my bill. **Let his debt** become my debt. **Let me be** your debtor. Romans 1:14-16. Being reminded of Jesus, **Isaiah wrote:** "*But He was wounded* for **our transgressions**; *bruised* for **our iniquities**; and *the chastisement* of **our peace** was (put) upon Him, and *by His stripes* **we were healed**," Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24-25. **Jesus took upon Himself** "*our debt of sin*." **It was put** "*on His bill*!" **Observe how**,

ILLUSTRATION: **Paul explains this** to the *Philippian saints*. **He wrote:** "***Therefore***, if there is any **consolation in Christ**, if any **comfort of (God's) love**, if any **fellowship (communion**) **of the Spirit**, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy being like-minded, **having** the same love, **being** of one accord, **of one mind**. **Let nothing be done**...but in *lowliness of mind*...**Let each of you** look out not only for *his own interests*, but also for *the interests of others*," Philippians 2:1-3; 2 Corinthians 13:14. See also Romans 15:1-2 and Galatians 6:1-2. **Listen again to the apostle's appeal** to Philemon to do **on behalf of Onesimus**! Consider now his close and promise. **He says (writes),**

b. "*I, Paul, am writing with my own hand*." **So, you won't be confused** as to who *makes this promise*. **Let me affirm to you**, I am the one who wrote this Letter, and now, I make this promise!

c. "*I will repay,* not *to mention* that you *owe me* **even your own self, besides**." **I will pay it**. *And maybe before you consider* this any further, **please do not forget**. **All that you owe me**, for *which I press you not (not sweating you)*, **but remind you** of **the debt you owe to the Lord as well**. Oh,

**4. Fourth**, "*Yes, brother, let me have joy* from you in the Lord; **refresh (encourage)** my heart in the Lord." **Let me witness** your *real generosity* in this matter, **for I am confident** that *you will do* the right thing **for both me and Onesimus**, your brother in the Lord. **Listen to Paul now,**

**5. Lastly**, "*Having confidence* in your obedience (cooperation), **I write to you**, knowing that you **will do** even more than I say (ask)," Philemon 1:21. **LOVING AND FAITHFUL BROTHERS** *do not need to be persuaded*; **they only need** to be asked. **AND FOR SOME**, they won't need *to be asked either*; **they will see the need and**

**step up on their own accord!** —[For such are the hearts and minds of them: to —*serve*, to be —*profitable*, and to be —*productive*.] Luke 8:15. **Observe**,
a. He wrote: "**And the things** that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, *commit these to faithful men* who will be able *to teach others also*," 1 Timothy 2:2. **Paul knew he could** "count on Philemon" **to do justly**, what both *their hearts desire* **for Onesimus**.
b. **Paul reminds** the Thessalonians: "Now we exhort you, **brethren**, *warn those* who are unruly, *comfort the* fainthearted, *uphold the* weak, and *be patient to all*. **See that no one renders** evil for evil to anyone**, but always pursue** what *is good for both yourselves and all*," 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15. ILLUSTRATION: **["I am coming also if the LSS!"**] **Hear now,**
D. Paul's closing request. "**But, meanwhile**, *also prepare a guest room* for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted (leave or release) to (visit with) you (myself)," Philemon 1:22. We find a similar close in his Letter to Philippi. Observe,
**1. First**, "*But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly*," Philippians 2:24. There was always abounding in the heart of Paul, his release, if it was the Lord's will. **History says** he was released from prison in Rome *after his first defense* **before Nero**. See 2 Timothy 4:16-18.
**2. Next**, He was not so fortunate in his second imprisonment. What an inspiring Letter Paul wrote and sent by the hands of *Tychicus and the "runaway"* **to his master**; that now affords him **(Onesimus) a greater service for the Lord, Paul, and his** *former master*, **but now a brother**!
**3. Finally**, now not **as a servant**, but as a **brother in Christ**, even as one, "*born out of due time* for the service of God." Amen. Just like the apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:8; 1 Corinthians 9:1.
E. Conclusion: **To whom can you find consensus or agreement?** If there is one thing our brotherhood needs now, it is: "*Not more confrontation, but sincere cooperation*!" **WE ARE BRETHREN**, *but we are not acting like we are* before God and men! **David explains,**
**1. He pens**: "*Behold, how good and pleasant it is*: for brethren to *dwell together in unity*," Psalms 133:1. **Also,** "For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within you. Because of the house of the Lord our God, *I will seek your good*," Psalms 122:8-9. **Paul wrote,**
**2. To Corinth**: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment," 1 Corinthians 1:10.
**3. To Ephesus**: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord…that you walk worthy…with lowliness of mind…with longsuffering…endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," Ephesians 4:1-3. Herein, let us all recognize that we must walk having: a) a *prevailing attitude* for unity, b) a *practice ascribing* to unity, and c) a *plan affording* "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Have you read the Plan? See Ephesians 4:4-6; Ephesians 4:11-16; and Ephesians 3:1-7. Finally, Paul wrote to the Hebrew saints,
**4. "Let brotherly** love continue," Heb 13:1. See also 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. As I begin to close, let me finally say, before something can continue, it must first begin and exist in the church of Christ. I know that it does in some places in America and around the world. But I ask you now, does it exist where you worship and serve the Lord? If it

does, let it continue; if it does not, let it begin. And it begins with you and yours. May God permit such to be so, if the Lord Says So! LSS. What we considered in this lesson was….

**CONCLUSION**

A. Outline. Paul's,
1. Confidence in Philemon
2. Conversion of Onesimus
3. Consensus of Philemon

B. Summary of Main Points.

1. First, we considered Paul's confidence in Philemon to do what he is about to request of him regarding his former slave "Onesimus," whose name means "useful." We are given no reason why Onesimus fled his enslaver, nor how he ended up in Rome. I see only the "handiwork" of God, and His will in providing to this "runaway" a new start in Christ, by his providential arrival at the door of Paul in Rome, to obtain the help he sought, while not even knowing it! Philemon might have spoken of Paul during Onesimus' attendance in the worship being held in his house. Paul's imprisonment was well known throughout all the churches of Christ. God is able!
2. Second, we discussed Onesimus' conversion to Christ while with Paul in Rome. I suggested that many who are now incarcerated are looking for Christ! If you have a loved one in prison, share this lesson with them. I encourage anyone who may be seeking the Lord to read it, for He is ever near you, and much more during your time of imprisonment. Your offenses can be forgiven; however, you must serve the time imposed by the courts. Make this a time of investigation for a fundamental change to occur within, so that when you are released, you will not return as a repeat offender!
3. Lastly, we investigated Paul's approach to win Philemon's forgiveness of Onesimus, and his reception again into his fellowship of church and family. However, not as a bond servant, but now as a free man, first in Christ, and now a brother to his owner, Philemon. Paul appeals to Philemon rather than commanding him to receive his son, because "I'm sending him back." Therefore, receive him, that is, (like receiving) my own heart." Paul reminds Philemon of his own debt to him and asks him to prepare lodging for him as well. Paul always had hopeful expectations for his release!

C. Invitation. Present God's pattern of conversion. Jesus said: "Come unto me, all ye that labor," Matthew 11:28-30. [Explain the POC, i.e., hearing and believing the gospel; repentance of all past sins, Luke 24:44-47; confessing faith in Christ, as the Son of God, Matthew 10:32-33; and then, by obeying the gospel, Romans 10:16-18; Romans 6:17-18; that is to: "repent and be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Spirit)," Acts 2:38; Acts 5:31-32; Ephesians 1:13-14].

D. Exhortation. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved," Jeremiah 8:20.

E. Motivation. Do as Peter directed: "Save thyself," Acts 2:40; Acts 2:36-39; Acts 2:41.

Visit and worship with the Church of Christ at Pickensville, AL (on their Conference Line). Worship services are held on Sunday at 11:00 AM, and Mid-week Bible Study meets on Wednesday at 6:00 PM. The call-in number is 1-480-660-5322, and the PIN is 988866. Tell them Ron Freeman invited you to join them in worship. You will be truly blessed! These men "know the Shepherd!" The Lord.

[It appears to me that these may have been there with him as he wrote this Letter to Philemon. I will not suggest that they were prisoners, but that they could have been visiting Paul to encourage him and bring him up to date on what is going on at the churches where they minister or serve in some capacity.

a. Epaphras is mentioned three times in the Letter of Paul to the churches, Colossians 1:7; Colossians 4:12; and Philemon 1:23. To Paul, he was: 1) "Our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf; 2) Who is one of you (minister of the church at Colossae), a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God; and 3) "my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you."

b. Mark, also known as Marcus.

1) Mark, known to us as the cousin of Barnabas. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey to the Gentiles.

a) Luke wrote: "Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia, and John departed…and returned to Jerusalem," Acts 13:13. He left the work and returned home; Luke gave us no reason why.

b) Paul's comments on his recovery during his last imprisonment: "Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry," 2 Timothy 4:11. A poor beginning, but a strong finish! This will be the problem of many who will serve the Lord. With God's help, you can recover!

2) Marcus. Paul includes him in his farewell to the Colossians:

a) "Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, Saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom you received commandments: if he comes unto you, receive him," Colossians 4:10.

b) "Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow laborers," Philemon 1:24.

c) "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son," 1 Peter 5:12. Mark (Marcus) was Peter's son in the faith. Initially, he exhibited some of the same fears as did his father, Peter. He became stronger and more courageous as he grew in the "grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," 2 Peter 3:18. And so will you if you continue in your walk of faith!

c. Aristarchus, is also mentioned in Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24. He was a companion of Paul in travel from Macedonia to Rome, Acts 16:29; Acts 20:4. Luke wrote: "One Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us," Acts 27:2. Called by Paul, "my fellow prisoner, and fellow laborer in Christ." Paul always recognized those who labored with him in the gospel.

d. Demas is mentioned here favorably; he calls him my "fellow laborer," Philemon 1:24. However, not so by Paul later. Paul would later write: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia," 2 Timothy 4:10. Here we have a strong start, but a poor finish. However, even these can also recover!

e. Luke, Paul's companion. He wrote: "My fellow laborer, and companion," unto the end, Philemon 1:24; and 2 Timothy 4:11. Luke gave us the "history and work of the Lord's Church" throughout the Book of Acts. He was a friend, companion, and traveling partner of Paul through many of his journeys throughout the Gentile Nations. We will ever be indebted to him for his service and devotion to the Lord! It was his words, inspired by the Holy Ghost, that began in Jerusalem and concluded in Rome. When you

read, teach, or preach: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers,” Acts 2:42. The author that comes to mind will be Luke! By inspiration, he recorded the “Gospel of Luke,” and later its companion work “The Acts of the Apostles.” Luke gave us a “history” of the birth and life of Christ, and in the Book of Acts, gives us the “history” of the birth and life of the church, the wife of our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself! Where the gospel of Luke ends, the history of the church in Acts begins. Luke preserves for us through the Holy Spirit, the life and works of the apostles as they fulfill the promise of Christ: “You shall be witnesses of Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and into the uttermost part of the earth,” Acts 1:8; Luke 24:44-49.]